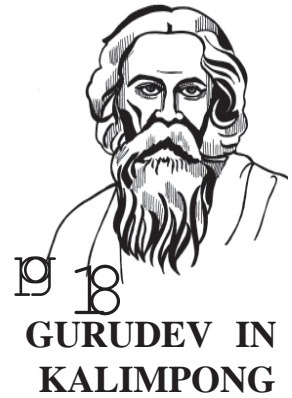


The voice of Kalimpong

Himalayan Times

Kalimpong Vol. 2 • Issue 9 • May 2005

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FAR FROM THE
MADDENING CROWD
BY MIRA REHMAN

JAYCON KONGIRUL
EYE CENTRE
BY ERRA SUII



AMNESIA
BY MONILA DE



KILLER ZONE

By Sandip C. Jain

If the producers of "Mystery Files", the super hit TV show on History Channel happen to learn of the under mentioned facts, maybe they would be interested to devote an entire episode on this mystery. I am sure any rationalist worth his salt would condemn this article and the facts placed hereunder as mere coincidence but the data available with **Himalayan Times** suggests that in too short a period of time too many incidents of the same type have occurred that too in such a small stretch of road, to just dismiss all of them as coincidence.

The stretch of road being the one that starts just below the Trikon Park (the lower road leading to Motor Stand) and runs down to the Municipal School (Below Nehru Manch). It is probably not more than 200 meters but in the recent few years at least eight major and several other smaller motor accidents have taken place within these 200 meters, taking the life of half a dozen people and leaving many more injured.

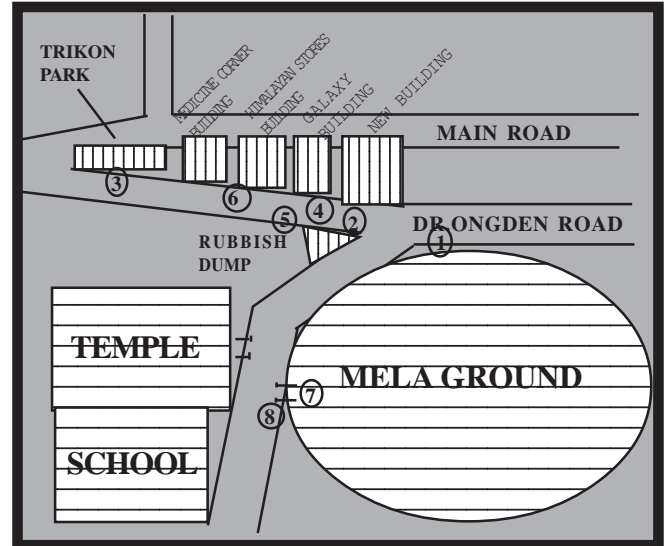
The facts are placed hereunder- for the non believers it may be coincidence- for the rest it is something that defies logic.

1. A truck tips over the old guard railings bordering Mela Ground and plunges on to the field below while a football game was going on- luckily the unsuspecting spectators sitting directly below the spot have enough time to flee and no one is injured.

2. An Army personnel driving his service Enfield bike loses control and side sweeps two people standing outside David Garage before slamming into the back side of a moving truck. The bike driver is killed on the spot while the pillion rider is injured.

3. Within ten minutes of the above incident taking place an old Willy Jeep has a brake fail and charges down directly in the direction of the crowd gathered at the site of the previous accident. The driver of the Jeep somehow manages to wedge his car into the open drain outside the Soft drinks shop below Trikon Park, averting a catastrophe.

4. In 2003, a Maruti 800 car which is parked below Aptec Computer Institute (next to the Soft drink shop)



belonging to a prominent social personality of the town somehow rolls down the road on its own and runs over four school girls who are returning home after tuitions. All four are injured- two of them are admitted in a critical condition to a hospital in Siliguri.

5. In early 2004 in a hit and run incident at night a person is killed by a speeding car, ten meters from the spot the above accident took place.

6. In 1999, a jeep load of school children of St. Josephs' Convent has a brake failure and smashes against the Himalayan Stores building. A dozen children are injured- some seriously.

7. In the year 2000, a Jonga loses control and plunges into a crowd gathered at Mela Ground for Dasain celebrations. A lady is killed on the spot while several others are injured.

8. In the year 2005, on the Nepali New Year Day, a Fire Department Vehicle plunges into a crowd of people gathered to take part in the New year celebrations, killing three and injuring several others.

Several other accidents have occurred right in this stretch- many of them minor and a few other major ones have not been included here as the complete details are not available with us.

So is it really a case of coincidence or is this really a Killer Zone??? □

EDITORIAL

All those of us staying in these beautiful Hills who have friends down in the metros, are familiar to receiving phone calls from these friends during Tourist Seasons, with requests for hotel room reservations. I receive at least half a dozen calls each season and the last one I received was just about two weeks back from a friend in Mumbai who wanted me to book two rooms for three days each in Darjeeling, Gangtok and Kalimpong for the last week of May.

I had to call up four hotels in Darjeeling before I could get a confirmed booking in a mid budget hotel. For Gangtok I called at least nine hotels yet could not book the required rooms. Every hotel had the same line- all rooms are booked!!! Finally I had to call up a friend in Gangtok and ask her to find a hotel that had free rooms. And as for Kalimpong- no problems what so ever- I called up the first hotel that came to mind and they had not two but six free room in the same period Gangtok and Darjeeling were jam-packed with tourist. I was told that in fact all hotels in Kalimpong were holding on to unreserved rooms even during this peak tourist season.

Clearly there is something wrong in the way prospective visitors to the region look at Kalimpong!!! We who live here and those who have visited the town will vouch that Kalimpong is no less beautiful than any if its neighbouring town- infact we have more to offer. But inspite of all these we always end up as a place which the tourists to the region are most likely to skip.

I feel we lack awfully in the marketing front- we have got to market Kalimpong in a better and more organized way and it will have to be a collective effort. Everyone has to come together and do his bit in promoting the town as a tourist destination. Maybe something like a "Kalimpong Tourism Development Organization" or something similar could be formed so that sustained and planned efforts can be made towards correcting the fault. It's high time now. We cannot just sit on the sidelines and blame others for the state we are in.

YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE

Dear Editor,

YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE

With reference to the article on Pedong in Volume 2/ Issue 8, for your magazine by Dr. Dick Dewan, I am compelled to put on record here that Dr. Dewan has managed to give a very true and accurate picture of Pedong. This sleepy little hamlet is one of the most beautiful places in the region and deserves recognition for being so.

Dr. Dewan is most definitely one of the most intellectual persons to have come out of Pedong and Himalayan Times has done justice to Pedong by carrying an article on Pedong by one of Pedongs great sons.

P.T.Bhutia

PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR

Dear Sir,

PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR

Having spent the first twenty years of my life in Kalimpong- I still consider it my hometown despite the fact that I have spent the next twenty four years in Nagaland.

The Himalayan Times you send me as per my subscription is my only source of information about by much loved town. The magazine I feel is a must for every Kalimpong lover who lives outside the town.

My favourite column in your magazine is "Recalling Kalimpong" by Dr. S.B.Wangyel who really seems an authority on the history of the region. Little known facts brought out by him really makes me home sick. One complaint that I have and I am sure that every reader of Himalayan Times will have, is that it is very irregular in publishing its issues. Try to adhere to a time frame and publish the magazine regularly in time.

PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR

Minakshi Pariyar

Dimapur

(By E-Mail)

PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR PAGE YOUR

DO YOU HAVE ANY THING THAT
YOU WANT TO SHARE WITH THE REST OF

KALIMPONG ???

HAVE YOUR SAY AT YOUR
PAGE

Hopes rekindled

FOUNDATION STONE FOR BUS STAND PLACED

■ Karan Shah

After years and years of planning, deliberations and delays finally there is something to cheer about—finally something on the ground level has been done to lessen traffic congestion in the town.

Much to the relief of hundreds of vehicle owners and drivers as well as to the traffic harassed public of Kalimpong, the Kalimpong Municipality finally has placed the Foundation Stone for a Two Storied Bus Stand in the town. This Bus Stand has been planned next to the Novelty Cinema Hall at 9th Mile.

The first phase of the Bus Stand, which is to be set-up in an area of 81 decimals, has been acquired from the West Bengal Forest Development Corporation (WBFDC). “In lieu of this piece of land the DGHC has handed over the Lichi ground



PUJA BEING PERFORMED AT THE SITE

FUTURE OF KALIMPONG



MASTER SRIYANS JAIN
DOB - 27TH FEBRUARY 2005



If you want your child's photograph to feature in this column of Himalayan Times, all you have to do is to send us a recent photograph of your child along with the Date Of Birth.

to the Forest Department. In addition a grant of Rs 8 lakhs has been arranged for the shifting and the construction of their offices there,” informed the Chairman of the Kalimpong Municipality, Mr CK Kumai.

Significantly the entire project, which falls under a Central government scheme, Integrated Development of Small and Medium Towns (IDSMT) has been initiated at a total cost of 2 crores. “Under this scheme the funds has to be borne jointly by the Center, State and the Municipality”, Mr Kumai said also adding that, “We have already received Seventy Five Lakhs for the first phase for which Forty Five Lakhs has been given by the Central Government and the rest by the State Government.”

This project however will be built phase wise. The first phase is to be completed in the next eighteen months according to the officials of the municipality.

“It is expected to accommodate a total of 36 buses in addition vehicles bound for Sikkim, Darjeeling and the Plains. The bus stand will start functioning as soon as the first phase is completed. We feel that after it becomes operational traffic congestion will come down in the town area”, Mr Kumai said. Former vice-chairman of the DGHC, Mr Hangu Subba and GNLFC Branch Committee President Mr Dawa Pakhrin were also present on the occasion. □

Sci-fi Centre to put Kalimpong on national science map

By Staff Correspondent

If things progress at the rate they are progressing at the moment, very soon, Sci-fi lover of the region need not travel all the way to the Eastern suburbs of Kolkata just to be able to have a chance to visit a Science Centre. Kalimpong, it is expected will have one such Science Centre all for itself very soon!!

The Rs. 2 crore Science Centre project which is being undertaken jointly by the Central Government and the DGHC is expected to be built in a 5 acre plot of land in the Deolo Hill area. The DGHC has already submitted a sum of Rs. 30 lakhs while the Central Government is to finance the remaining Rs. 1.70 crore. It has been learnt

that this plot of land has already been surveyed by the local authorities and has been approved by them. It is also learnt that two senior officers of the National Council of Science Museum (NCSM), Mr. KG Kumar and Mr. S. Chowdhury have been given their nod for the proposed site but a confirmation on the same is expected shortly. Mr. Dawa Pakhrin, one of the moving forces behind the high tech project speaking to the media says, "We expect a final confirmation on the site in about a months time when the Director General of NCSM, Mr. I. Mukherjee visits the proposed site." As per Mr. Pakhrin a government order has already been issued by the concerned department of the Central

government with regards to the project.

As per norms laid down by the NCSM, the project has to be completed within two years of its commencement. Mr. Pakhrin further informed that a request has been sent to the concerned officers for the setting up of a Gorkha museum within the Science centre. "A Gorkha museum which will display antique artifacts relating to the culture and heritage of the Gorkhas will help educate the present and future generation of the richness and diversity of the Gorkha community," said Mr. Pakhrin. Once completed, the Science Centre in Kalimpong will be the 39th of its type in the country. □

cartoon

I am 100% sure he will never find a job in a Call centre..... Just look at his response to a courtesy call!!!



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PARIL & GAJMERE FELICITATED

By Staff Correspondent




In a bid to acknowledge their contributions in their respective fields, the Kalimpong Winter Fest Organizing Committee had organized a felicitation programme for Mr. S.K.Gajmer and Miss Paril Lepcha at the Town Hall recently.

Paril Lepcha who won two Gold medals in the last edition of the National Sub- Junior Archery Championship is at present a student of the Mount Carmel School. Parils dream of making it big in the National Senior level appeared to be in jeopardy due to lack of funds. Her parents, though former State Level Archers themselves, were not in the position to support all of Parils sporting requirements. Archery, like all modern sports, is a very expensive game with an entry level fiber bow costing over Rs. One Lakh. It was when it had started to appear that a promising career would come to a premature end that a group of citizens of the town decided to step in and provide a helping hand. "Corpus" - an association- was hence formed to help promising sportsmen and sportswomen from Kalimpong. On

their initiatives more than Rs. 53,000.00 was collected from well-wishers which was handed over to Paril during the function.


The other personality to be felicitated during the programme was Mr. S.K.Gajmer, the former Additional Supdt. of Police in Kalimpong who has now been promoted as the Special Supdt. of Police (I/B) in Siliguri. Mr. Gajmer in his two and a half year tenure in Kalimpong was instrumental in initiating several social programmes in the town. He also earned much praises from all corners for his crusade against drugs and alcohol abuse as well as for his role in nabbing Mahendrapal Singh Kohli, the Internationally wanted suspect in the Hannah Foster murder case.

The programme was attended by school students, members of most of the social organizations of the town, Heads of Institutions as well as Mr. Gaulan Lepcha, MLA. ▣



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All TDS/TCS returns in the case of Companies and the Central & State Government are required to be filed in the *Computer Media*, at the *TIN Facility Centre* at Siliguri, viz

GOPAL CHOWDHURY
STATION FEEDER ROAD
BEHIND FIRE BRIGADE
SILIGURI-734405
(0353) 2501737
98320-21115

ASHOK BAGARIA
SIKHA DEEP BUILDING
SEVOKE ROAD
SILIGURI 734405
(0353) 2533121
94340-47121

Shyam Agarwal
Niladri Sikhar Building
Hill Cart Road,
Siliguri
94340-01663

The *last date* for filing annual TDS/TCS returns relating to the F.Y. 2004-05 is **30.06.2005**. For the F.Y. 2005-06, QUARTERLY STATEMENTS are to be filed for Tax Deducted/Collected at source for the quarter ended 30th June, 30th September, 31st December and 31st March. The statements are to be filed within 15 days from the end of the quarter.

For further details contact :
Income Tax Office, Taxari Road, Kalimpong.
(03552) 255259 OR

Log on to :
www.incometaxindia.gov.in or
<http://tin.nsdil.com>

Please note that no TDS and TCS returns of Corporate and Government deductors will be received in the Income Tax Department.

INCOME TAX OFFICE : KALIMPONG



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INTERNET AND ON THE
CELL PHONE SEEMS TO
HAVE EFFECTED
BUSINESS OF THIS
OLD TRADITIONAL
FORTUNE TELLER WHO
NEVERTHELESS STILL
SETS UP SHOP EACH
DAY OUTSIDE THE
POST OFFICE**

KALIMPONG SPEAKS!!!!!! LAST ISSUES QUESTION-

Should Kalimpong have at least two
Private Banks??
The Answer is a overwhelming YES!!!

Yes 92% No 8%

This issues question is -
Should Mela Ground be allowed as a
venue for Melas/Circuses?
Answer in Yes or No by 29th May 2005 and sent it
to us at

**KALIMPONG SPEAKS
HIMALAYAN TIMES,
C/O HIMALAYAN STORES,
KALIMPONG**

HERITAGE SCHOOL IN SURVIVAL STRUGGLES



By Karan Shah

The tricolour fluttering atop the entrance seems has lost its shades as has the appearance of the whole complex. Taps are running dry, windowpanes are broken, locked laboratories caught in spider webs unused for years: this is the look on the face of Kalimpong Government High School.

Established in 1951 as the fully government sponsored co-education institution in the sub-division and the third of its kind in the district the school has certainly not been able to live up to the expectations of the town: the fingers being pointed towards the State Education Department and the DGHC Departments in charge of the School for never actually being serious about the problems plaguing the school.

The School once conducted studies up to Class XII as the name Kalimpong Government High School suggests. But sadly due to infrastructural problems it now conducts classes only up to Class X. Says Mr. P.C.Pradhan, Principal of the school since 2003, "Lack of experienced teachers in the Higher Secondary level in the school forced us to close down Classes for the Plus

Two level.” He further says, “We are facing an acute shortage of teachers as there are only a limited number of teachers for a total of 500 students.”

“The HS section can be reinitiated to much benefit of the many students hailing from less affluent backgrounds. But new teachers have to be appointed”, he adds.

It was learnt that 12 teaching posts (to be appointed via public service commission) are lying vacant.

Speaking on the condition of anonymity, a senior staff of the school says that the budget prepared by the school is submitted to the state department every year but since secondary education is a transfer subject to the DGHC the funds are never released. “We are caught in a crossfire”, says the Hindi teacher of the school Mr. ML Sharma. He has been in the school since 1971.

The present conditions are a big confirmation of things not heading in the right direction. Students are cramped in classrooms due to shortage of desks, the shaky ceiling (a house for pigeons) might fall any time. “There is only one DGHC appointed female casual worker for the cleaning of the entire school. Besides the whole complex has not been renovated for a decade now. Forget minor problems like the phone line being disconnected for non-payment of bills”: quipped Mr Pradhan adding, “No group C staffs have been appointed for the last 5 years now. Group D staffs are managing most of the work”.

Says Pradhan, “We are afraid that the quality of education may in future or may already have degraded from the previous high standard of education dispensed here. This is because each teacher is overburdened with excess workload. Each teacher takes far more classes than he or she can actually manage.”



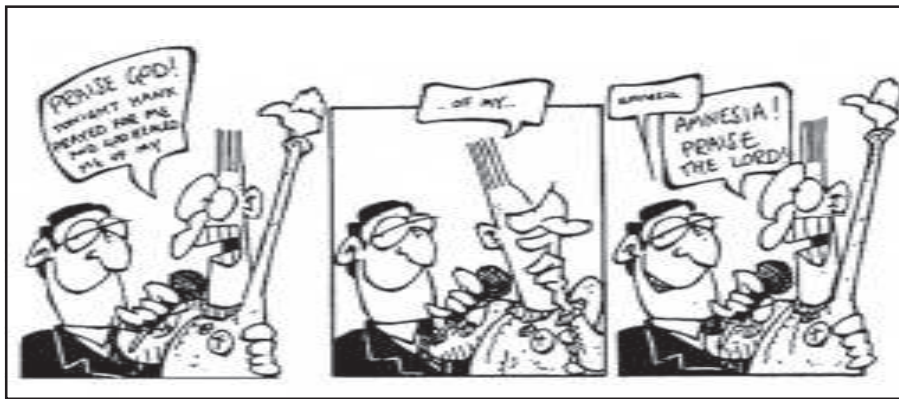
The school originally spread out in an area of 5 acres has now been reduced to a mere 3 acres due to encroachments.

The school originally spread out in an area of 5 acres has now been reduced to a mere 3 acres. This is due to rampant encroachments. “We have written to the concerned authorities several times in the past but to no avail”, says Mr Pradhan.

“A teacher here has not received his salary for the last 6 months”, says another staff. “One more teacher has not received his salary for last three months. The DGHC has not even approved his appointment who came here after having passed PSC. He will be returning back very soon,” he added.

While Director of School Education (State), Mr. SK Ghosh could not be contacted the Education Secretary (DGHC), Mr. CT Bhutia termed the blockage of the salaries of two teachers (another of Darjeeling) as a ‘policy matter’. “However the problems are almost dealt with”, Mr. Bhutia said.

Says an ex student of the school who is now a teacher in another educational institute, “The powers which control the school are too engrossed in other matters. Educating the next generation is too small and petty a matter to merit their attentions.” ■



AMNESIA

By Monila De

Amnesia is a curse of the aged. I never quite understood its impact until I became a victim. I did not believe the outrageous tales my late friend Shakeresh used to tell me about his elderly aunt “Mamima”. She was well known for misplacing everything from shoe laces to tooth brushes.

These stories about Mamima that I am about to relate I thought were priceless until my Amnesia put them in the shade.

One day, Mamima couldn't find a bucket full of milk which she had collected from the milkman in the morning as usual.

There was uproar in the house as the cup that cheered became a cup of discontent, served black. There were no handy packets of white-ner available then and the milkman would come next day. The children had to do without their daily glass of milk. They refused to eat dinner without their pudding. The dog turned up his pug nose at ‘dal-bhat’ and gloomily slunk under the sofa on an indefinite hunger strike.

Mamima went berserk. Guests were coming for tea that evening and there was not a drop of milk in the house. She squarely blamed the daily help for stealing the milk. The maid was insulted beyond her endurance. How

could the mistress blame her for stealing a whole bucket of milk when all she indulged in was one glass of milk on the quite, quickly replacing it by an equal quantity of water, in the already watery milk, to make up for it. Nobody had ever been the wiser the and now this monstrous allegation touched her to the core. She left.

Mamima disturbed at the loss of a maid but absolutely distraught at the loss of a solid brass bucket, a family heirloom. Her great grand mother had used it to milk her cow.

She searched high and low for it. The children dived under beds, sofas, all possible nooks and corners where a bucket could possibly fit. It was gone without a trace.

Almost a week later Mamima opened the steel cupboard to take out money. There stood the shining bucket full of congealed milk!

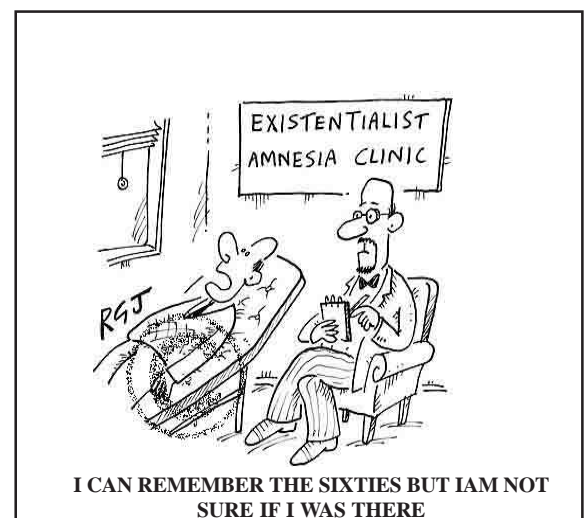
One day, Mamima was ready to roast two enormous Benarasi ‘Bay guns’. Her brother had brought these special ‘Bay guns’ all the way from Benaras. A rare treat the family was looking forward to with great anticipation since such ‘bay guns’ are not available in Calcutta.

Mamima sans maid made the coal fire just right and got ready to roast the two plump ‘bay guns’ but lo and behold they had disappeared. A mammoth search for the elusive ‘bay guns’ took place but no sign of them. They were discovered weeks later, wrinkled, shriveled sitting sadly in the coal bin.

Now being in the habit of misplacing big bunches of keys, shoes, money, spectacles and myriads of other things everyday, I can visualize Mamima going to the cupboard to take out money to pay the milkman, bucket in hand. The handiest place to deposit the bucket was the half empty shelf inside the cupboard. She then took out the money and locked the cupboard... It was also a very natural action to place the two ‘bay guns’ carefully in the corner of the coal bin to free her hands to take out the coal. The hands, I am afraid, are the real culprits who take it upon themselves to carry out voluntary actions without the knowledge of the ageing brain.

Last winter I had gone out wearing a cardigan and a coat on top. I came back home, took off my coat but there was no cardigan inside. I don't remember undressing in public but the cardigan is missing to this day.

Excuse me, I can't write anymore. I have misplaced my spectacles!!! ■



JAMGON KONGTRUL EYE CENTRE

BY PRERNA SUZI



Kalimpong has the proud privilege of having the only Eye Hospital in the Darjeeling hills known as the Jamgon Kongtrul Eye Centre. It is the result of vision of the Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche III and dedication and hard work of his monks and disciples. It is located just above the junction of Atisha Road and Lower Bridle Road on the same premises as the J.K.M. Home for the aged. The Eye Centre has been established in collaboration with Tilganga Netralaya, Kathmandu, Nepal the Himalayan Cataract Foundation USA by Paramita Charitable Trust, registered in Delhi. The Trust was established by Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche III in order to promote and manage social welfare projects in and around Kalimpong and other parts of India.

Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche III, Lodro Chokie Senge was the eldest son of the Sadutsang family of Kalimpong. From the age of six he entered monastic life at Rumtek Monastery, under the care and

guidance of His Guru the XVI Gyalwa Karmapa. During his tours in the hills he had seen a lot of old people neglected and blind and underprivileged children without education and abandoned. While on a visit to Nepal he happened to meet Dr Sanduk Ruit who had already established a name for himself. Rinpoche and Dr Ruit became a team and decided to help rid the people of the Himalayan regions of eye cataract and provide proper eye care. However, before His Eminence's Vision could be realized he passed away in a car accident near Salugara in 1992. In the meantime his work had to continue. He had already built a monastery at Lava and established a medical centre there for the surrounding villages, where even now the medical facilities are being provided at a nominal cost to those who cannot afford to pay and free to those who cannot. In 1995 the Old Ages Home was started. In 1996 the present Incarnation Jamgon Rinpoche the Fourth was found and since then other projects have been completed and

running successfully like the J.K.M. School for underprivileged children at Topkhana and an extension of old age home and building the Eye Centre.

Before the Eye Centre was built, Paramita Trust had been holding eye camps with the help and active participation of Dr Ruit and Doctors from the Himalayans Cataract Foundation since 1996. Eye camps have been held at an interval of every two years. In 1996, the first eye camp was held where 3000 patients were screened and 460 cataract surgeries were performed. In 1996 approximately 4500 patients from 14 different villages were screened and 700 cataract surgeries were performed. Again in 2000 an eye camp was held at the J.K.M. School in Topkhana. Doctors from all around the district as well as from Nepal and Bhutan participated. About 5000 patients were screened from areas like Malbazar, Jaldhaka and Todey Tangta and more than 800 surgeries were performed. In 2002

an eye camp could not be held as a Government ban was imposed for holding eye camps and performing operations outside of proper hospitals. So in 2003 it was decided to build an eye centre in Kalimpong. According to Mr. Thinley Ngodup, manager of all Pramita Charitable

selected and sent for training to Tilganga Netralaya and Dr Sona Bhutia, a local lady doctor was chosen and employed as the resident doctor. She has completed her medical studies from Calcutta and has performed cataract operations along with Dr Ruit and other senior visiting doctors of the Himalayan

poor. In May 2004 in Lava 150 patients were screened and 7 surgeries were performed. In June 2004 an eye camp was held in Sangsay where 126 patients were screened and 5 surgeries were performed. Then in October 2004 an Eye Camp was held at the Eye Centre and Dr. Ruit performed the first retinal transplant successfully. It must be mentioned that Kalimpong Sai Samati has been of great help with the screening of the patients. Although all the equipments have not yet come, Jamgon Kongtrul Eye Centre provides the most hygienic environment for proper eye care in the whole of the Hill district, free of cost to the poor and needy. According to Mr. Thinley Ngodup, they want to go slow with the expansion plans and the entire community of the Paramita Charitable Trust is happy that they have been able to build a much needed facility for the people of the Hills and happier still when they see the happiness on the faces of the people once they regain their eye sight. They would like more people to make use of the facilities being provided in the Eye Care Centre. ■



Trusts' projects lots of places were examined for the purpose, but they found that for administrative reasons the best place would be at the Old Age home itself. So the construction began in 2003 and was completed in early 2004. Funding for the construction was arranged by the devotees and disciples of Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche. The first eye camp at the eye centre was held in July 2004. Nearly 2500 patients were screened from Rambhi and Malbazar Areas and 330 cataract surgeries were successfully performed by Dr. Ruit and his team. While the eye hospital was being built, staff had to be recruited and trained. Local boys and girls were

Cataract Foundation. They all say that she has the skills, knowledge and steadiness of hand to be a good doctor. The main motive of setting up the eye centre is to concentrate on providing good eye care at affordable price with the use of latest equipments. The other important factor is to concentrate on community service. Every month screenings are done in different villages and eye camps set up for the poor, free of cost. People who come to the Eye Centre are charged Rs 25/- for registration. Those who can afford to pay are charged between Rs 500/- to Rs 2000/- depending on their capacity to pay. Medicines are also provided free of cost to the patients who are





■ By Mira Rahman

If a person has ever gone through Neel Darpan written by Deenabandhu Mitra, he would jump at the idea of seeing and spending a few days in a place where a wealthy Indigo-owner used to live at the turn of the 20th century. Morgan House in Kalimpong in West Bengal is such a place.

Ensconced in the mountain of Durpindara, now surrounded by the Kalimpong Cantonment area and overlooking the valley downward, Morgan House is a heritage house with a history of its own. The empty flag post is still there, reminiscent of a past when the ailing Prime Minister of India Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru decided to spend a few days there to recuperate but could not make it due to sudden death.

Built on 16 acres of land in the hill, three kilometers off the centre of Kalimpong, Morgan House looks straight in the face of Kanchanjunga Range. It was built around 1930 to commemorate the wedding of the daughter of an Indigo owner with a jute baron Mr. Morgan. Since the couple died without heir, it was handed over to a Trustee Board and eventually given over to the Government of India and then to the West Bengal Government and was later turned into a tourist lodge.

Just before the advent of mighty Himalayan winter in the month of November, the House with its thick rectangular stone block wall to resist outside change of weather and its wooden floors and steel-framed glass-paned windows

surprisingly keeps a normal temperature inside. One can view the snow capped ranges of Kanchanjunga glowing in the morning sun in golden colour while lying in bed from early morning till noon if the sky is clear. At dawn the glow is reddish gold reminding one of Oman gold immediately. (The gold mines in the kingdom of Oman lies side by side with copper mine, hence Oman gold has a distinct red hue of its own). The sunlight slowly descends on the lower ranges as if a huge torch is lighted up from the sky to help the viewer to get a crystal clear view of the valleys downwards and displays the border with Sikkim. The humongous brewery of Danny Denjappa there shines in the sun from the West Bengal border.

Kalimpong is a city of flowers, orchids and cactus. The orchid starts blooming from December onwards and stays up to June. Rare varieties of cactus is found, nurtured and grafted there. The price ranges from five hundred *taka* to five hundred thousand *taka* in India currency.

Nowhere in the world, I have visited so far, I have seen this profusion, combination and varieties of flowers growing wild with exquisite colour and shape. In Morgan House alone I have counted five hundred varieties of flowers. The house has Roman paved ways from different angles and the split



level stairs at the garden introduces one with umpteen flowers and foliage. The stone wall of the house is covered with vine and several other flowering creepers. The stunning panoramic beauty with riot of colour cannot be explained by writing.

So, it is no wonder the place where Morgan House is situated is called

“Chandralok”, meaning the land of moon, thus giving it a romantic touch. Chandralok includes the vast cantonment area, the army Golf course, the Tibetan Gumpha with big establishment, government lands and several view-points. The view-points show the West Bengal-Bhutan border, the confluence of three rivers, Rimki from Kalimpong, Teesta from Tibet and Reiling from Bhutan. From high altitude down below, rivers with their blue waters and white sands amidst green valley are a sight which is best felt but cannot be described. It is the Himalayan ambience in the Taraj region which communicates with the soul. One kilometer down from Durpindara is Gouripur House (now partially burnt) where poet Rabindranath Tagore was a frequent visitor. His famous poem Janmadin was written in this house.

At Morgan house, the camallea plants have turned into 15/16 feet trees and are in full bloom with flowers the size and look of huge

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roses. Three colours are there – shocking pink, white and slightly lavender. The Azaleas are coming out like stars from thick green bush. Yellow flowers of all shades and size are all over the place. “Aparajita”, blue bell, Plancita (bright red, blood red, pink) lavender colour “Lazzawati”, Bantara, Lantana are growing wild everywhere on way to Morgan House. There is one flower people call there ‘Champa’ and look like double Perjure in lilac and white which smells like ‘rajanigandha’ and its fragrance wafts over the whole valley. Once inside the house, whenever you move, the fragrance follows you. Then there are bunches of wild lilac colour flowers in tall plants all the time moving with the wind. The giant ‘Dhutura’ – the size of temple bells – are also there. There’s a tree whose leaves with big heart shapes has clusters of magenta colour

flowers dropping in cascade and is called Arti (arati) by local people. Then there is peuee tree (local dialect) with apricot-like blossoms covering its leaves. Every morning at about ten, three birds the size of my thumb sit on it and eat something from the blossom. Then there is wild ‘maina’ sitting quietly on the dark side of the pavement for a few minutes and then flying over to the wilderness.

Kalimpong is full of ‘squash’, a kind of vegetable which grows wild there. Everywhere the fruits are hanging from creepers and sometimes the children are using these as throwing stones. The creeper thrives in marshy land. When I told the manager that I want to eat squash, he look at me with dismay. Then I explained we buy it for 500 or 600 taka a kilo in Dhaka (at Agora).

This tourist lodge has an understated elegance with its old look, spotlessly

clean wooden floor, spacious bathroom, fire-place in every room, daily change of linens, towels, unfailing room service and daily arrangement of fresh flowers everywhere, weather a guest is there or not.

The staff, though government employees have unflinching sense of duty and loyalty to their jobs and defeat service. Many celebrities have stayed in this lodge. Nargis, Sunil Dutt, Rajkumar, Om Prakash, Kishore Kumar, Uttam Kumar and many others came here. Chester Bowels once the American ambassador in India, spent a few days here. When we were there, twelve Swedish travelers came to stay in the lodge. I came to know they have been coming there for the last three years like migratory birds. Our 16-day stay in Morgan House gave us absolute bliss and peace of mind.

Recalling KALIMPONG

—By Dr. S.B.Wangyel



David Macdonald's section on Kalimpong in 'Touring in Sikkim and Tibet', written in 1943, makes one raise the eyebrows with a certain amount of regularity. He wrote, "There are now four Banks in Kalimpong known as KUEVER BANK, LTD., BANK OF CHINA, CENTRAL BANK OF INDIA, LTD., and DAS BANK, LTD., 'Four bank in the town in the 1940s does sound a bit far-fetched but that was what it was. A reference to Kalimpong Mission Industries states that "the local people are taught and employed in various arts and crafts, such as carpentry, leather work, carpet making, and embroidery."

Like the above four banks the industry too is a thing of the past. In Macdonald's days Kalimpong was "served by excellent approach roads" and "first class motor roads" within the town. The fare for a whole taxi reserved from Siliguri to Kalimpong, you've got to believe this, was mere Rs.35. Dwelling on matters of health Macdonald lets us know that "medical attention of the highest order is available in Kalimpong, at the Chateris Hospital, one of the largest in Bengal, outside Calcutta." It appears that all other hospitals grew in size while The Chateris (Sub-Divisional Hospital) suffered growth retardation. In December Kalimpong Mela was a big event not simply because the gathering was large but also because people from Sikkim and Bhutan also participated to exhibit their produce. Macdonald recollects the Europeans and the tea planters who took off for Kalimpong during the mela week. They held sports, gymkhanas, concerts, danced and tea partied. Beside the

visitors the powerful and the meek of the town and the surrounding areas both joined the games at the melas. Kalimpong still holds melas but the good old charm no more survives. Macdonald proudly arrested, "The water supply is excellent. Water is collected in a reservoir at the headwaters of the Pelli River, some 13 miles away in the hills, and from there piped into subsidiary reservoirs from which, after chlorination, it is distributed to consumers." There is no point commenting upon the how far we have come from those times but sufficient it to say that every precious drop counts today. Old Macdonald

certainly would not want to be alive in Kalimpong today but even in his death he must be turning in his graveyard for he, a lover of Kalimpong, had written that "Ringkingpong can never become congested" with the view that the existing law restricting one residence to an acre of land would never be violated. Much of the landscape has changed and now with the army downsizing its presence could further changes be far away! The good old saying states that times they are a changing and it certainly has in Kalimpong. ■

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Expression!!!

Hope

by annie lee

Leaving everything behind.....
 i walk towards the only blur of light i see,
 don't know where i'm goin,
 don't know where i'm heading.
 Staring across the sky.....
 i see my star, shining down on me,
 that's the only ray of hope that leads me..

Deep in the night

i realize that my star has disappeared,
 where did it go, where will i find...
 i panic and i stumble....
 darkness everywhere,
 that's when i feel a touch,
 a feeling of being whole...
 i turn around and see u there,
 and that's when I know....
 my shining star has come
 to make me go on.....

THINK IT ON!!

By Ujjwal Dahal

It connects human to unknown
 Supply strength to broken heart.
 Like a wave of evolution in Nature
 Like a moon full, during new room,
 In one life.

Takes one part stillness of,
 Mountain and deserts.
 To the roaring oceans.
 Stand still during cyclone
 It has link, between fantasy,
 And reality.

A connection between individual,
 And unindividual.
 Has heavy that can make on
 In cold heart of cruel dew in all self
 Ruled the at night.
 Provides strength to fight a
 Whole life.

Feeling of heart, random movement of life,
 Trust to be trusted on life
 Biggest of world, as so,
 Creat of God, make it on!
 Just, think it on!

Kalimpong quiz

Kalimpong it seems is brushing up its knowledge about itself!!! Now we are receiving more correct answers than ever before. But sadly there can only be one winner of the prize and it goes to

Miss Pema Tamang
B.L.Dikshit Road
Kalimpong

The correct answers to the questions asked in the last issue are-

1. Shri Man Bahadur Gurung
2. Gammon India Ltd
3. Rev. D.G.Manuel
4. Mrs. Renulina Subba
5. 1952

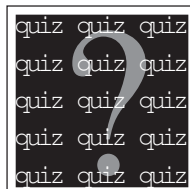
This issues questions are-

1. Dr. J.A.Graham also officiated as the headmaster of and school in Kalimpong. Name the school.
2. In which year did Lady Mountbatten visit Kalimpong?
3. Who started Kalimpong Arts & Craft Institute?
4. Name the late editor of Himalayan Observer?
5. Who started the St. Georges' School at Pedong?

Answer the above questions correctly and rush in your answers in a plain sheet of paper alongwith the coupon given below to win a sleek Parker Vector Ball Pen courtesy

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Your entries must reach us by the 29th of May2005.



Jumble jumble

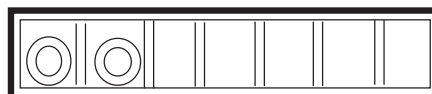
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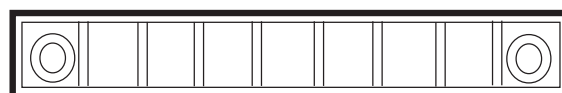
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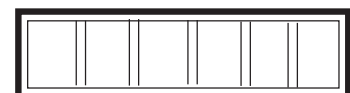
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(hint: local nurseries)



Complete the above Jumble and send in your entry with the coupon given below by the 29th May 2005 to win a free lunch for two at **Soods Garden Retreat, Kalimpong**. The correct answers for the jumble published in the last issue are

RONGU, AMBIOK, SAMTHAR, KASHYEM, KANKIBONG & MARIA BUSTY.

The winner will be decided by a draw of lots. The names of all those who sent in correct answers for the jumble in the last issue are -Suresh Mangrati, Bikash Kalikoty, Subhas C. Pradhan, Ashesh Bardewa, Mira Chhetri, Gita Gurung, Manish Kumar, Tshering Bhutia, S.K.Subba, Christina Gurung, Ahmed Hussian, Ramesh Sunar, Bikash Pradhan, Sona Bhutia, Nelson Lepcha, Shankaman Rai, Roshan Golay and the winner is-

Master Akhinai Khati
of SUMI Kalimpong

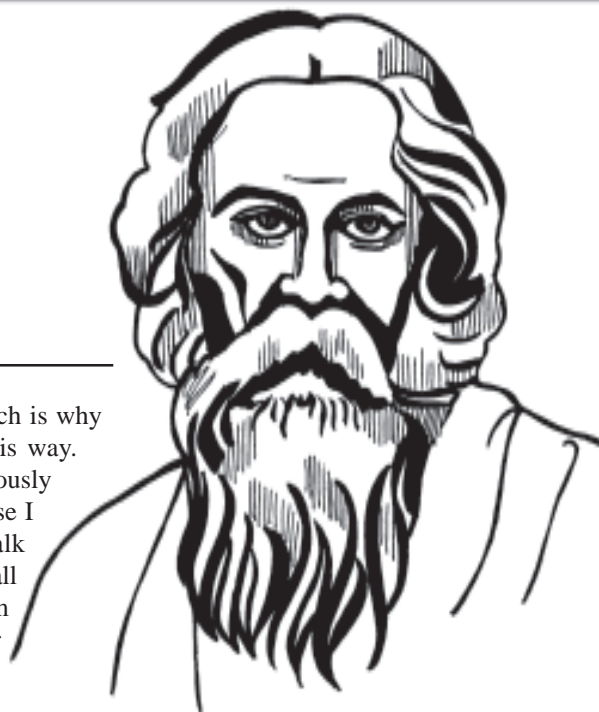
Please submit your entry in a plain sheet of paper alongwith this coupon. Please do not tear this page to submit your entry.



ON THE BIRTH DAY OF THE POET AT KALIMPONG

By J.S. Basu

Translated by Animes Adhikari



Rabindranath Tagore, the world renowned poet of Bengal was born on the 25th of Baisakh, according to the Bengali calendar. This is a very auspicious and red letter day for all. Every year when the days comes each and everyone is imbued with a festival mood long before sunrise.

I had been lucky that I got an opportunity to stay at Kalimpong, and visiting the hill town on the holy birthday of the great poet, I experienced unalloyed pleasure in my mind.

On my visit to Kalimpong, I stayed at a house at the foothills on a piece of land. The road in front of it could be seen from the inner apartment. From here one could see the Kanchanjangha a snow-white peak of the Himalayans, standing there from time immemorial. On the entire North-East side of the house is standing proudly a wide range of peaks and the vast area of beautiful Sikkim. Chitrabhanu the house of the son and daughter-in-law of the poet is close to our house. It is now converted into an educational institution under the Govt. of West Bengal. Two years after the death of the poet on the 2nd of swavan, 1350 according to the Bengali calendar (1943), Rabindranath, the son of the poet inaugurated the house.

The day was cloudy. The sun was not bright enough. A whim suddenly caught my mind why not go to the Gouripur House and reminisce about Tagore on such a holy day? I was off to the Gouripur House by 3 o'clock in the afternoon. There were two ways that could lead to the house: one that is an hour's walk along a round-about way among the hills, while the others takes 20-25 minutes to

reach, but is too steep which is why almost everyone avoids this way.

And for me it would obviously creat a real problem because I am not accustomed to walk along such hills. In spite of all these, an all prevading whim to trek to the Gouripur House captured my mind.

After covering some way along the zig-zag road I came near the house and found the incline here very steep. It is made of medium-sized boulders setting one on top of another. From here I had to climb straight up very carefully to reach the house compound directly. As I was thinking how to overcome the hurdle, I found a very old man near his eighties, with a burden of firehood on his back, slowly climb all the steps and reach the top without much effort. In awe gazed and gazed and became speechless. A few lines of an English poem, that I read in my childhood suddenly came through my memory lane.

Standing at the foot, boys

Gazing at the sky,

How can you get up boys

If you never try?

These lines left a strong impression upon my mind. I must try to reach there man can overcome all difficulties that come in his path. As Nepoleon once said "Impossible is the word, found in fools' Dictionary". At once the irresistible passion from within made me shake off all hesitations and I moved

upward keeping my steps carefully on the stones and within a short while I reached my destination.

Reaching the house it seemed to me that I was one like Tenzing Norgay or Edmund Hillary who had mounted the renowned snow-capped peak - the Mt.Everest.

The Gouripur House is a solitary edifice on a flat stretch of ground among the hills as if mother hill is standing there with a child in her lap. There is no settlement around; only a few old flower plants such as Magnolia, Agelia and some other fruits trees of unknown variety are standing there faded and withered. It seems no reapaing has been done in a long time. On a piece of white plated marble stone on the wall is inscribed in Bengali that Tagore lived in this house and he recited his self-composed poem 'Janmadin' (Birthday) on the 25th of Baisakh, 1347 according to Bengali calendar which was broadcast live on radio.

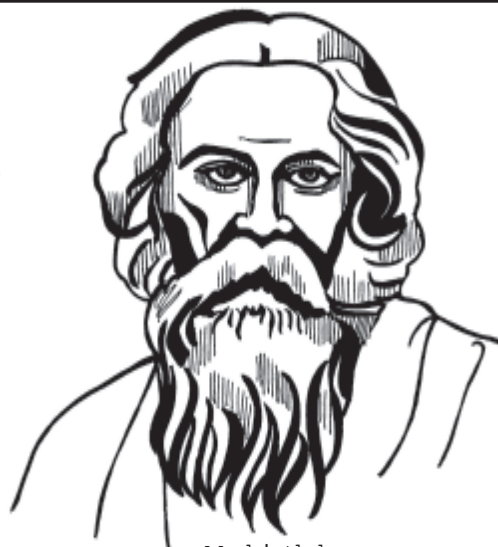
I gazed spell bound. Not a soul was in sight. In the midst of this solitude is the poet's memorial. I was transported to

the past and imagined that the poet was reciting the poem 'Janmadin' as it were:-

My birthday
 With Death's passport in hand
 It has emerged from its dive
 into the chasm of nothingness
 To breath a while on a outskirts of existence.
 From the warm out claim have dropped
 the beads of the past years.
 And with the newest birthday .
 Begins the counting of the days of a new-born life.
 The present moment swims away with
 the waves of the sea of endless time.
 Everything sweeps away into the past.
 A day will come when past too will take rest
 in the lap of historical times.
 Everything will go into oblivion
 nothing will exist for ever.

I spent some time there at that desolated house with my mind in touch with the living memory of the poet. The sun is set, darkness of the night was approaching. I became conscious of the chirping of the crickets? Paid my tribute to the poet and decided to return. On the way I remembered a song composed by the poet himself:-

"Jakhan parbe na more pear chinch are bate which means
 "When my footprints shall no more tread this way" ■



My birthday
 With Death's passport in hand
 It has emerged from its dive
 into the chasm of nothingness
 To breath a while on a outskirts of existence.
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 the beads of the past years.
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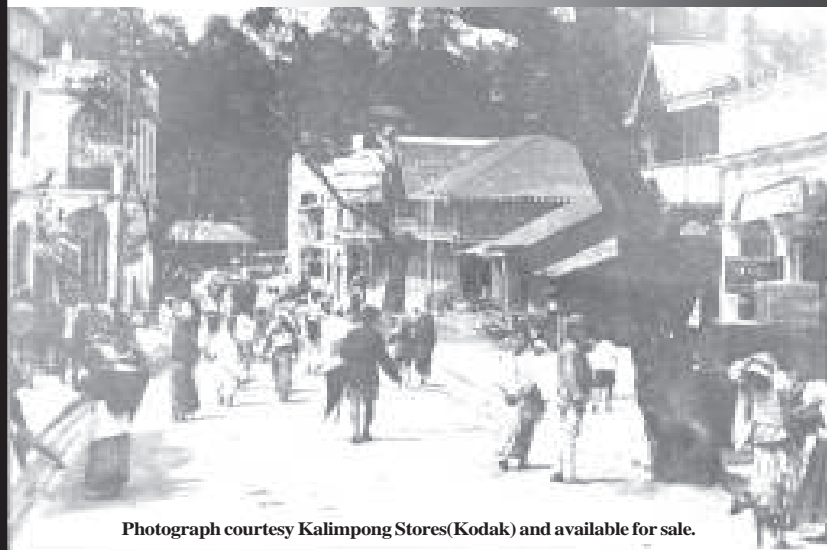
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nostalgia



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ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

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